

WILLIAM C. DODGE.

JANUARY 8, 1897.—Committed to the Committee of the Whole House and ordered to be printed.

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Mr. SNOVER, from the Committee on Claims, submitted the following

REPORT.

[To accompany H. R. 981, the bill having been recommitted for correction.]

The Committee on Claims, to whom was referred House bill 981, for the relief of William C. Dodge, respectfully report:

That the claim of Mr. Dodge for compensation has been favorably reported and passed the Senate four times, and has been favorably reported five times by committees of the House, but each time failed to be reached for final action.

The facts in the case, as set forth in the previous reports, are as follows:

It appears from the testimony that the operation of filling cartridge cases with powder had always been performed by hand down to 1864, and that it was a very dangerous work, explosions frequently occurring, destroying life and property, despite the utmost precautions.

June 17, 1864, an explosion occurred in the cartridge-filling shops at the arsenal in Washington, D. C., where 150 operatives were employed, which killed 21 persons and seriously injured many others, who were buried among the burning ruins.

That in consequence of this disaster the petitioner conceived the idea that this work might be done by a machine, and after consultation with the officers in charge, who expressed doubts as to the feasibility of his plan, but encouraged him to try, he devised a machine, had a small one made, and submitted it to the Department for trial. Colonel Benton, then in charge of the arsenal, in his official report, under date of December 27, 1864, after describing the machine and the tests to which he had submitted it, concludes with this statement:

"The principle of this machine is a good one, and a machine properly constructed on it would, I think, give greater uniformity of weight to the charges, and work could be turned out more uniformly, rapidly, and safely than at present done by the hand process."

The result was so satisfactory that four days thereafter the Department gave petitioner an order to furnish a full-sized machine which should fill 100 cartridges at a time.

After much trouble and expense the machine was delivered August 18, 1865. It was officially tested and approved, and in his report, dated February 15, 1866, Colonel Benton says:

"It can be worked at the rate of six slides-full per minute, or about 360,000 per day, so that one such machine would fill as many cartridges as could be made by any one establishment. If a greater number, however, were required to be filled, the capacity of the machine could be easily increased by increasing the number of holes in the slides and drawers.

"For cartridges like those of Sharp's and those with copper cases (now used), the use of this machine affords a considerable saving of time, as one machine can do the work of many hands."

The great merit of the invention, however, consists in providing means for insuring uniformity of charge, which the present Chief of Ordnance, in a letter to the committee, says is "a very important matter," and that he "knows of no machine prior to that invented by the petitioner that provided any means for that purpose."

He also says: "Mr. Dodge's invention seems to antedate anything of the kind in this country."

The invention has been embodied in all machines since built and used by the Government, the present machines being so modified as to also put the bullets into the metallic shells, and then crimp the shells on the bullets to unite them and render the cartridge water-tight. Prior to this invention all cartridges made by the Government had been filled by hand. Since this invention they have all been filled by machines operating on this principle, and doubtless always will be, not only because of the saving in time and expense, but also because of the greater uniformity with which they can be filled, and which General Dyer, then Chief of Ordnance, said was of more value to the Government than the proposed saving of life and property.

It also appears that the machines have been built by the Department and furnished to foreign governments at their request, by permission of the Secretary of War; and that this invention of Mr. Dodge's, with others, has been recognized by such governments, the King of Spain having conferred on him a decoration, and the King of Italy a gold medal.

The benefits of this invention to the Government are many. The saving in the cost of filling the cartridges made since its adoption has been from \$20,000 to \$30,000. It has greatly reduced the risk to both life and property, has enabled the Department to concentrate the business at a single arsenal, thereby enabling the Government to dispense with a large number it formerly had located at various points, and the expense of keeping them up, and enables the work to be performed with immensely greater rapidity in cases of emergency, and far more perfectly.

From the nature of the invention, it is one that is of value to the Government only, as it is a thing that can not be sold to or used by the public at large.

The petitioner has never been paid a cent, either for the machine furnished on the order of the Department or for the use of his invention. The Chief of Ordnance says that "he is entitled to remuneration," and the Secretary of War also says he ought to be paid.

The petitioner also claims that the Government has used for several years a patented improvement of his in cartridges, but as that was a matter of minor importance, the committee have not given it any consideration in arriving at their conclusion in this case.

The committee are unanimously of the opinion that the petitioner is justly entitled to remuneration, both for the machine furnished and for the use of his invention, and therefore report back the Senate bill, with the recommendation that it be passed, with an amendment fixing the amount to be paid Mr. Dodge at \$10,000.

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